

Missoula Job Service Workforce Center
F.E.S. Project Report
2nd Quarter (November 2006-January 2007)

Initial Results

Currently enrolled students:

- Fourteen of fifteen students (93%) enrolled in the Financial Fitness class series have completed. The students are paid a \$250 incentive bonus for completion. They are offered a \$100 bonus if they choose to purchase a minimum 5 month Certificate of Deposit and allow it to reach maturity. Two completers have purchased a \$250 Certificate of Deposit through a partner financial institution.
- Eleven students are currently enrolled in our third **Financial Fitness** class series, which runs 1/9 – 2/6/07.
- Nine students are registered to attend the fourth Financial Fitness class series, which runs 2/21 - 3/21/07.
- Four students are registered to attend the fifth Financial Fitness class series, which runs 3/29 - 4/26/07.
- Eight students are currently enrolled in our second **Call Center Customer Service** class, which runs 1/8 – 3/19/07.
- Three students are currently attending school in our **Carpentry** program through the College of Technology. Program dates are 1/23- 5/11/07.
- We have seven females attending our **Dental Assisting** offered through Adult Education. This 86 hour class runs 1/9 – 4/17/07, and students had to be at a 10.5 grade equivalent reading level to enroll. Thus far, our students have had 100% attendance and express great satisfaction with the class and the instructor. All seven have earned their Red Cross Adult CPR certification as part of the class.
- We have four students attending individualized training programs:
 - JM: **computer skills** training offered through Adult Education
 - JC: attending evening GED classes and taking a **Drafting** class through Adult Education
 - TM: needs to complete 500 hours in **Cosmetology** at Modern Beauty School
 - ES: will get her **CDL** through College of Technology
- Two students remain in the Medical Office Essentials training, which ends in January.

Placement in Employment and further education

- Twenty-four students are currently still in a training program. Of these 24 students:
 - 12 are employed, and
 - 12 are unemployed.
- Seventeen students have completed their training (or quit their training). Of these 17 students:
 - five are now unemployed
 - eleven are employed

- one is a full time student at College of Technology

Financial Fitness

- Nineteen participants opened Individual Development Accounts in the second quarter. We now have a total of 25 savings account holders.

Expanding Partnerships

- FESP grant coordinator Tina Schmaus is now serving on the Advisory Council for Missoula's BSAFE program. BSAFE (Building Security through Assets and Financial Education) is an IDA / asset building program for victims of domestic violence and provides Missoula Workforce Center with the opportunity to network with other agencies and private enterprise participating on the Council. These entities are: YWCA, Consumer Credit Counseling Services, MT Credit Unions for Community Development, MT Legal Services Assoc., Missoula Federal Credit Union, Gateway Community Federal Credit Union, North Missoula Community Development Corps, and MT First Credit Union.

Problems Encountered in First Six Months

- While the majority of our participants have earned a high school diploma or GED, we have found that a general overall **lack of education leads to failure in some vocational training programs**, such as Medical Office Essentials. This lack of education appears as lower testing scores on the TABE test. Initially, we did not set a minimum educational testing standard for all participants. Finding this to be an issue, a recommendation follows at the end of this report.
- **Quality evening childcare** remains an issue. Even with the funding available to pay for it, adequate quality evening childcare is simply not available in our area. We have also learned that even with the childcare FESP is providing at Adult Ed, we must be extremely flexible in working with families. Their own childcare may fall through and they only need it for a short period of time, or on very short notice, or they may not require care for a timeslot they have been allotted.
- The majority of FESP participants require **weekly intensive case management**. Many of them have not developed the soft skills necessary to balance life, work and school and are more inclined to give up on their schooling without required one on one meetings on a regular basis.
- **Lack of reliable transportation** is a barrier to almost all participants in the program. Even for the participants that own a vehicle, repair and maintenance are cost prohibitive, and contribute as a barrier to success in their moving forward in their life circumstances.
- We have found that for some participants living in subsidized housing, this **guaranteed housing is a de-motivator** to moving ahead in life. Participants often express fear at losing their subsidized housing if they take a job that pays a decent wage. Many of the people living in subsidized housing have lived there for years, and with no time clock for receiving subsidized housing, they will choose to stay in poverty rather than to take a job and become wage-earning taxpayers. We address this in our recommendations which follow.

Current Program Modifications

- **Personal Responsibility Award:** Due to a large number of participants being unable to access the childcare dollars in our grant because of limited evening childcare offerings in Missoula, we created a Personal Responsibility Award. All participants who do not access the childcare dollars FESP provides are eligible for this award, and payment is calculated based on the number of children. Participants who successfully complete and pass their training program are awarded \$4 per training hour, per child, with a maximum payout of \$1,000 to any one family. Participants are awarded this money for taking care to arrange suitable childcare so they can attend training.

Recommendations for Program changes

- All applicants for FESP will be required to take the TABE test and provide these test scores. Based on their scores, they may be required to take additional schooling through Adult Education, which will assist them in succeeding in their selected vocational training. Standards will be set with the input of the professionals offering the training programs.
- All FESP participants that do not have a GED or high school diploma will be required to attend school and work towards this goal to earn FESP incentives.
- FESP considers it necessary to establish tutoring time be available for participants. In Missoula, this may be available through Adult Education. We may also hire a tutor to be available for set times for specific classes, such as Dental Assisting. We could also set up this tutoring as study nights at partner agencies with childcare provided on site.
- FESP is considering contracting for childcare with other local agencies such as the Parenting Place to give our participants more options in finding quality childcare.
- FESP is considering lengthening the timeframe for our financial fitness class to expand the topics we address. We believe it necessary to include in-depth information on payday loans, fast tax services, and EITC. We also plan to work with participants addressing their fear of losing benefits by becoming wage-earning tax payers.
- FESP is considering requiring all participants to attend study skills classes at Adult Education. Three mandatory classes will be: Introduction to Adult Learning, Test Taking Strategies and Improving Memory and Concentration. Participants would also be required to take a fourth class which focuses on career transition. Students would select at least one from the following workshop topics: Abilities, Motivation & Decision Making, Self Confidence & Goals, Interests, and Preferences.
- FESP is considering paying all training incentives at end of training program, regardless of length of training.